

THE DEATH OF THE CHAIRMAN'S WHIM



Making the most of your
sponsorship in a digital age

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Sizing up sponsorship

*Welcome to the new era of sponsorship:
are you making the most of it?*



*Foreword by Michael Taggart,
Director of Digital at MRM*

When I was a muddy-kneed nine-year-old, I had a hand-me-down football shirt with the word "Hitachi" emblazoned on the front.

The electronics firm had been the sponsor of Liverpool Football Club a few years earlier and, as much as I loved that replica shirt complete with the mysterious Japanese brand name on the chest, I couldn't for the life of me work out why Hitachi would want its name all over a sports kit.

It took roughly another nine years for the penny to drop. I was buying my first VHS video recorder as a student - a Hitachi - and an almost imperceptible "warm fuzzy feeling" came over me as I set it up.

Had the football kit from half a lifetime earlier influenced my purchase? To this day, I don't know the answer - but I suspect it was a factor.

Questions like this still occupy my thoughts as a 40-year-old communications professional working in financial services. Most firms MRM works with - large and small - are at least occasionally involved in sponsorship. But what do they get out of it? Are people influenced to buy the products sponsors are selling

simply because that brand is supporting their favourite club or event or activity?

*"Is it enough in
this day and age
simply to put
your name on
whatever you're
sponsoring?"*

How do you measure the effect of sponsorships and how do you know when they are working well?

To mull over these questions, MRM has knocked on the doors of some of the keenest minds in financial services and sponsorship.

Adrian Britten, MS Amlin's Director of Communications and Brand, is not only an expert in brand management but is also a Registered Chartered Psychologist and has a PhD in psychology. He sets out the four key pieces of psychological evidence that underpin MS Amlin's strategic approach to sponsoring the Andretti racing team in the global Formula E series. They are almost certainly relevant to your firm too.

Next up, Martin Bamford, who is - perhaps - the UK's best-known financial planner, takes us through what he has learnt about using sponsorships in a local setting to the advantage of his small family business, Informed Choice. A must-read for anyone at an financial advice firm. We also share MRM's brand new nationwide research into the take-up of sponsorship activities by financial advisers - we think you'll be surprised by what we've found.

Finally, we've called on the brainpower of Henry Chappell, Chief Executive of one of the UK's biggest sports PR agencies, Pitch PR, which has worked on major projects such as the UEFA Champions League and BT Sport's broadcasting services. Even social media can look a bit old-hat in a world where Pokemon Go and Oculus Rift virtual reality headsets are à la mode and Henry argues that sponsors need to find new ways and new technologies to engage their audiences as part of their sponsorship marketing.

Now that's a team that anyone would be proud to sponsor, right?

Don't forget to contact the team at MRM if you think you could be getting more out of your firm's sponsorships (see the back page for our contact details). ■

The rise of corporate sponsorships and the death of the 'Chairman's Whim'

Regulatory concerns have led to a raft of brands using sponsorships to reach new audiences, but which companies do it well?

1

2

100m SPRINT

There is much debate over the value of digital and social media communications in the highly-regulated financial services industry.

Many brands, particularly those at the Joe and Josephine Public end of the audience spectrum, recognise the urgency of embracing technologies their customers use to conduct their daily lives.

It's simply a case of relevance.

Yet arguably more City firms are still shying away for fear of regulatory guidelines, often because they fear violating the regulatory guidance, leading to fines.

Do we have to get Instagram pictures approved by compliance, they ask, unsurely. If we retweet an unsafe message, are we responsible, they wonder. What if our staff share our press release on LinkedIn but add their own comments? And on and on.

This has produced a stand-out trend

in financial services communications: the emergence of digital brand communications conducted through the vehicle of corporate sponsorship.

Marketeers take the view that talking to customers and prospects about the types of activities, events and pastimes they sponsor is fundamentally safe. Firms that do this are not, after all, promoting their products and services.

Not only that, they say, but we are more likely to build good relationships with our targets if we talk about the topics they already know and enjoy. The sponsorship choices must be based on what the customers love - not on the 'Chairman's Whim'. So far, so obvious.

But another crucial insight, recognised by both MS Amlin's Adrian Britten and Pitch Chief Executive Henry Chappell in these pages, is not so obvious and is tripping up those who don't get it.

"You do not simply publish that content, hoping they consume it passively"

It is this: if you are going to attract customers by engaging them on their interests, you have to actually talk to them - and allow them to talk back. That means finding creative ways of involving those communities in the content you publish. You do not simply publish that content, hoping they consume it passively and walk away, expecting to reap the rewards.

It's all about engagement.

Happily, there are plenty of financial services firms leading the way in engaging their prospects in customers. And two stand-out companies are doing this in creative ways. ■

CASE STUDY: BREWIN DOLPHIN

BREWIN DOLPHIN has sponsored the Chelsea Flower Show for five years and this year wanted to redouble its efforts to add value to clients and prospects with its sponsorship content*. The wealth manager created a Facebook and Instagram community, which chiefly

distributes expert content for people keen on gardening. Brewin also built a new website for its gardening community, which aimed to collect email addresses in return for regular updates of gardening guidance and tips. Underpinning the work of growing its gardening community, was a highly targeted online advertising campaign.

Around four months into the creation of Brewin's gardening social media profiles, KPIs include growing a community of nearly 4,000 on Facebook and over 300 on Instagram which are made up of Brewin Dolphin's target demographic, as well as collecting more than 250 email addresses.



CASE STUDY: MS AMLIN

MS AMLIN sponsored the Andretti Formula E racing team in its second season, starting in Beijing in October 2015*. Its goal was simple: rather than merely 'slapping our logo on the cars', the business wanted to build awareness among, and affinity with, a new global audience that was younger, more urban and more tech-savvy. Any City-based B2B insurer has the potential to be seen as a 'stuffy' institution. However, MS Amlin took the bold step to reposition its brand through its sponsorship of Formula E and, in so doing is busy engaging with a new global audience.

Its targets were to build the association between MS Amlin and this new and innovative lifestyle sport; to develop social media following across platforms; to foster a high level of social media engagement and to become an integral part of the Formula E ecosystem.

The strategy was about crafting a relevant tone of voice for the intended audience, finding them online and delivering unique content that would inform, educate and entertain them. There is saturation TV coverage of the races but when it comes to driver interviews, profiles and reportage, there is a bias towards those with famous family names - for example, Prost, Senna, and Piquet. MS Amlin knew there was a market for original, live, behind-the-scenes reportage that official TV crews would miss. The insurer's social media research told us that motor-racing fans are fun-loving - irreverent, even - but crave technical information about their sport and appreciate the aesthetics of a great sports brand.

MS Amlin created five brand vehicles:

1. Behind-the-scenes content. This included video clips of interviews with the drivers on YouTube, Instagram, Twitter and Facebook, "almost-live" reactions from senior team members

to unfolding events on the track and tweets quoting drivers speaking during the race.

2. A live Twitter Q&A with their driver, Robin Frijns.

3. An Amlin Andretti Spotify playlist for each race region, engaging local musicians.

4. A suite of imagery that conveyed the design-focused and urban nature of Formula E.

5. Engagement 20 hours a day with fans leading up to races.

The results were stunning. The firm gained 25,000 followers across social channels. It averaged 10,813 engagements per month on Twitter (Oct 15-May 16) and 1,410 engagements per month on Facebook (Jan-Jun 2016). Some 18% of the Twitter audience was assessed to have a net worth over £190,000.

* MRM worked with both Brewin Dolphin and MS Amlin on the campaigns above

Why just slapping a logo on a car won't work

Are all sponsorship deals equal?



Adrian Britten, MS Amlin

Most brands involved in high profile sporting events are not looking to increase their brand awareness.

Instead, the

goal is brand differentiation. The idea is that, by partnering with the sponsored asset, for example a racing team, desirable characteristics will transfer to the sponsor.

But does this always work? Published research helps us answer this question. It turns out that when an audience comes across what we psychologists call the 'message fragments' of a typical sponsorship - for example a logo or slogan - these elements receive only low level mental processing. This means audience attention focuses on, say, the racing car of our example, not the perimeter boards or the bridges or the on-screen logos.

However, we also know that well-known brands can benefit from this 'peripheral processing' (another psychologist's

phrase) by acquiring some qualities from the asset that is being sponsored. In other words, slapping a logo on a car can work - so long as the brand is well-known.

Selling apples, buying oranges: why sponsorship measurement is wrong

Despite marketers having very clear sponsorship objectives and there being thoroughly well understood psychological processes, sports marketers continue to use advertising equivalent value (AEV) to value and then measure sponsorship effectiveness.

AEV calculates the price of buying the advertising airtime or print space to reach the same audience. However, this says nothing about how well the desired characteristics are transferred from the asset to the brand. Yet this is the precise objective for most sponsorship arrangements.

The true commercial value of this type of sponsorship is of course the impact on brand characteristics. This is how sponsorship should be priced and evaluated.

Advertising and sponsorship: a case of apples and oranges

Advertising and sponsorship involve wholly different psychological processes. At its most basic, advertising is disruptive,

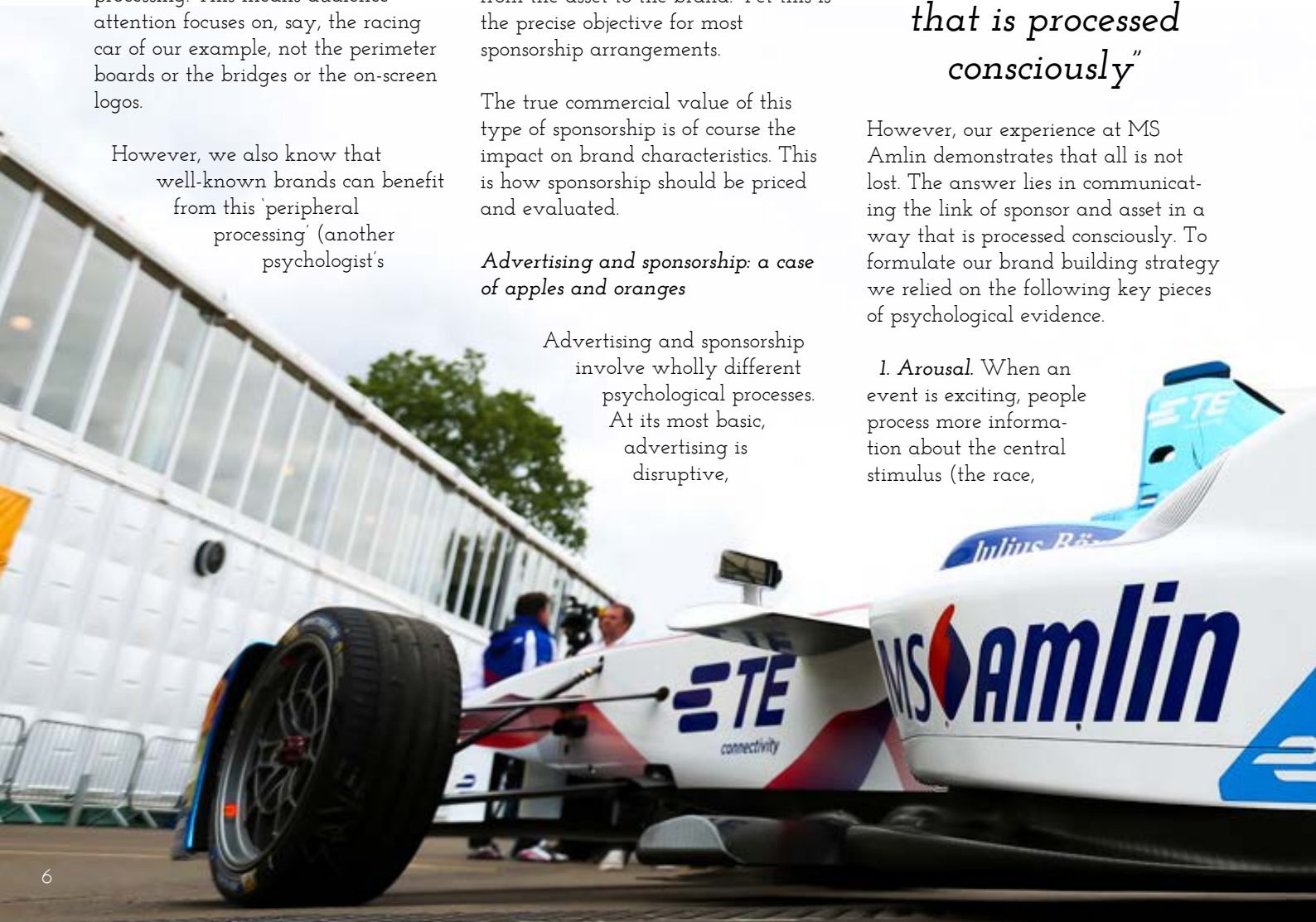
attempting to grab attention and encourage high level processing of the messages the audience is seeing and hearing.

By contrast, brands that are not well-known fare poorly in the low-level processing that typifies most sponsorships. With no well-formed construct in the minds of the audience, there is nothing to which the qualities of the sponsored asset can be attached. This means that for low-awareness brands, slapping a logo on a car is a significant waste of money.

"The answer lies in communicating the link of sponsor and asset in a way that is processed consciously"

However, our experience at MS Amlin demonstrates that all is not lost. The answer lies in communicating the link of sponsor and asset in a way that is processed consciously. To formulate our brand building strategy we relied on the following key pieces of psychological evidence.

1. Arousal. When an event is exciting, people process more information about the central stimulus (the race,



the match, the play, the music etc.) and peripheral processing is reduced (perimeter logos, on screen sponsor messages etc.). We concluded we needed to negotiate rights that would fully integrate not only our logo but our brand messaging into the assets – in our case Formula E's MS Amlin Andretti racing team, including its cars and drivers. This would allow us to activate the sponsorship in a way that would encourage central rather than peripheral processing. That meant being central to those features of the sponsored assets with which an audience desires to engage and using social media to extend the arousal generated beyond the sponsored event duration. One of the many examples of our execution in the real world was making drivers available for live question and answer sessions on Twitter.

2. Prior experience. With only poorly-formed mental constructs about MS Amlin among our audience, we needed to repeatedly communicate the link between ourselves and the racing team in a way that would encourage conscious processing of our messages.

An example of how we have successfully achieved this is the use of our data modelling analysts, whose day job is to model insurance data, to develop unique tools for our race team. While this benefits the race team and driver performance, it also provides a uniquely compelling link between MS Amlin as a technically-advanced insurance business and our sponsored team.

3. Involvement. Reflecting the cognitive route to promoting involvement with MS Amlin we set out to be the primary source of compelling information about the sponsored asset. We secured this by negotiating rights to the messaging of the team and its drivers. Balancing this with an emotional route to involvement, we focused on developing followership and participation in the dynamics of the team. Both of these continue to be delivered through global social media in a number of languages and across numerous platforms.

4. Social categorisation. Using sponsorship participation and content we continue to reinforce that MS Amlin is in the category of brands that is defined as being responsible, focused on sustainability, future-oriented, technologically savvy and socially progressive. We use social media activation to fully immerse MS Amlin in our sponsored assets, so that we are categorised as a global brand that is integral to the concerns, interests, attributes and motivations of the target audiences. ■

For more information on MS Amlin visit www.msamlin.com and to stay up-to-date with the team visit www.msamlin-andrettife.com.



Ne'er the twain shall meet?

Our research shows financial advisers know the value of sponsorship deals, so why aren't more of them using it?

A key task for financial advisers is spreading awareness of their businesses with potential customers – usually in their locality. It goes without saying that the more well-known a business is within its community, the easier it will be for that firm to generate leads. There are, of course, a number of ways of raising awareness, including seeking coverage in local magazines and newspapers, using social media, hosting or speaking events, networking and more.

But, as Martin Bamford of Informed Choice suggests, one form of marketing above all others affords the opportunity to build relations with clients around their passions – and that's sponsorship.

Yet both the take up of sponsorship among financial advisers and the sums of money they are willing to commit appear to be low. MRM conducted a national survey of financial advisers* and discovered that fewer than half (49%) said they sponsored activities or events.

The impact digital media can have in supporting the objectives of sponsorship – often around connecting with prospects on an emotional level – is huge and growing. For example, initiatives like social media question and answer sessions with sports professionals or behind-the-scenes video at music concerts offer deeper fan experiences. Digital technologies

can also be used to distribute follow-up content outside of real world events, like conferences. When social media is used to support sponsorship, people suddenly have greater reason to share brand messages than they would otherwise have. Happily, our survey points towards the understanding financial advisers have of these points.

Of those who were involved in sponsorship, 98% said they were using digital media to support those activities. Given the ABCI demographic of the average client, it is perhaps no surprise that LinkedIn was the most-used channel for that support activity. Some 98% of those who were using digital to support sponsorship used that network, which is known for its business focus.

Next came Twitter (74%), followed by the company website (72%), then Facebook (41%). Use of online video platforms (18%), Google Plus (13%), Pinterest (10%), Instagram (10%), Podcasts (5%), WhatsApp (3%) and third party blog sites (3%) ranged between insignificant and negligible. A growing view among digital experts is that social media is becoming a 'pay to play' arena, a view even more widely held following the publication of Ogilvy's 2014 paper [*Facebook Zero: Considering Life After the Demise of Organic Reach*](#). The main platforms are offering inducements – usually greater online reach

– for brands to commit to paid media, including promoted tweets and Facebook advertising. Nearly a third of our respondents appear to understand how this works – with 31% saying they used social media advertising in the last financial year. Around seven in 10 (69%) said they were not, suggesting most financial advisers do not have the budget, do not see the benefit or did not know about paid digital media. Budgets are arguably low with 11% saying they spent £200 or less in that year, 1% spending between £201 and £300 and only 3% spending more than £500. The remainder either spent nothing or did not answer the question.

Financial advisers seemed to be looser with their purse strings when it came to sponsorship activity. Asked how much they spent during the same period on sponsorship activities, 13% responded £1-£2,000 and 6% said £2,001-£5,000 – with the rest responding either 'nothing' or 'don't know'.

All in all, the picture is mixed. There would seem to be a reasonably sizeable portion of financial advice businesses – perhaps a little less than half – that understand the brand benefits sponsorship can have when coupled with digital activity. But in the other half activity is infrequent or non-existent. ■

*81 financial advisers from 81 firms were surveyed at four conferences hosted by Nucleus, the adviser wrap platform



"Each sponsorship gains us new clients"

Martin Bamford, IFA and Managing Director of Informed Choice, has turned the sponsorship community events into a lucrative way of acquiring new clients. Sticking to local events, such as flower shows and 10k races, means he gets the most bang for his buck.

1. What events have you sponsored in the past?

In the past 12 months, we have sponsored several local events including a charity 10k race (the Jigsaw Run) which attracted 250 entrants, the Cranleigh Parish Boundary Challenge (a half marathon or marathon distance run around the parish boundary of Cranleigh) and a season of eight classical recitals at Cranleigh Arts Centre. We have sponsored the new Cranleigh Literature Festival and also the Cranleigh Food Festival, as well as the Cranleigh Art Exhibition.

We are also sponsors of Cranleigh in Bloom, which this year has added 70 hanging baskets and several areas of floral displays to the high street. Our sponsorship of this initiative extends to baskets outside our office but also floral displays outside the nearby village hall and the planting of a raised bed in the same area.

We have also sponsored a local business awards and an EU Referendum debate this year, in both cases putting our name and team members in front of prospective clients.

2. Why choose sponsorship as a way to market your business over paying for an ad in your local paper?

Sponsorships give us an opportunity to really get involved in the local community. Advertising can be effective for brand awareness, but the real value in sponsorships is getting in front of our target clients and developing relationships which

lead to business. Where we do place print advertising, this is typically to raise brand awareness around our sponsorship activity. For example, we advertise in the Cranleigh Arts Centre brochure which is produced three times a year, with a message to say we are proud of our sponsorship of their events.

3. You tend to go for local events - is there a particular strategy behind this or is simply because it's relatively easy to get involved in activities in your area?

As a relatively small business, we have a limited budget for marketing, so need to focus this accordingly. By sticking with local events, we get the biggest bang for our buck. It also allows us to dominate the local market and appear omnipresent. Within the space of a couple of years, we have effectively put our brand head and shoulders above the competition, so prospective clients automatically think of Informed Choice first when they need the services we offer. The speed at which this has happened has taken me a little by surprise; we always had a good brand reputation locally, but two years of concerted effort and regular sponsorship has made an incredible difference. One local councillor recently told me that we have become the 'only game in town' as a result of our sponsorships of various events and organisations.

4. You've sponsored a range of events, from theatre to running - is there a reason you haven't always stuck to a single event or type of event?

Our starting point for sponsoring events is to think about the appeal to our clients. We spoke to our existing clients, especially those most valuable to the business, and identified several common themes in terms of their interests; running or walking, gardening, literature,

classical music and theatre. We get the best results from saturating the local market with our brand, to the extent that prospective clients immediately think about us when they need our services.

5. Have you ever got a new client off the back of one of your sponsorship deals either directly or indirectly?

On average, each sponsorship tends to result in one or two new clients, as direct enquiries. The enquiry rate improves when we are personally involved in the organisation of the event, rather than simply spending money to have our brand displayed on banners or other materials. It's the cumulative impact of sponsorship though which leads to indirect enquiries from these deals, which means that our new client acquisition has shifted from a regional to very local focus during the past couple of years. It has also helped improve the average value of new clients and allowed us to become more selective when engaging with clients.

6. What other outcomes would you see as being desirable returns on your investment in Informed Choice's sponsorships?

As business owners who also live in the local community, sponsorships allow us to give something back to the village. We are all ►



passionate about the community here as we live, work and play in Cranleigh, with my children also educated here. Sponsoring and now chairing initiatives like Cranleigh in Bloom helps to foster a real sense of civic pride. Setting up Cranleigh parkrun in October 2014, and attending nearly 100 of these weekly events since then, has introduced me to a wide range of people, many of whom have subsequently become clients or close friends.

Another benefit of sponsorships is they create content for our marketing. Each sponsorship provides something to write blog posts about on our website and include in our weekly emails to clients. There are always plenty of opportunities for photographs and PR attached to the various events we sponsor, which has allowed us to build a great relationship with the local press.

7. What role does sponsorship have to play in client relationships and retention?

One of our criteria for choosing sponsorship deals is the ability to invite existing clients and professional contacts to attend. For example, we are sponsoring an outdoor

performance of *Much Ado About Nothing* in the Rectory Gardens this summer, again via Cranleigh Arts Centre, and will be taking 20 clients along with us as guests. Creating the opportunity to get social with our clients and professional contacts, improving opportunities for referrals. Our selection of sponsorship deals also allows us to reveal something about our interests and personalities to our clients, which we believe helps with relationship building and long-term retention.

8. What does a sponsorship deal typically comprise for Informed Choice - ie: do you brand running t-shirts, do you create content, do you repeatedly choose same events etc?

We are very hands-on when it comes to the sponsorship deals we make, which usually involve more than simply giving money to the event. As a minimum, we want to attend the event and introduce it, so those people attending see who we are and get to know us. We introduced each of the classical recitals we sponsored at Cranleigh Arts Centre, even if this

meant horribly mispronouncing the names of classical composers! For Cranleigh in Bloom, we serve on the organising committee and I am chairing the initiative this year, which means I have the perfect excuse to visit every local business owner and get to know them. I am also involved in the Cranleigh Chamber of Commerce committee, helping to organise and publicise events, and continue to be a Run Director at Cranleigh parkrun, volunteering there on a regular basis.

We tend to repeat our sponsorships of the same events, usually adding something new each year, as long as we have capacity to get involved and the suitability opportunity arises. The next sponsorship deal we do will probably involve the local youth football team, as there is a family connection there with my nephews playing and it is a fantastic local club which needs some support. As well as money for shirt sponsorship and running costs, we can contribute our time to help them with promotion and marketing, to hopefully grow their numbers over the next few years. ■



Just how relevant are you?

The success of your sponsorship deal lives and dies by the relevancy of your community, so how do brands measure the calibre of their audience?

Ask a marketer what the point of corporate sponsorship is and they will say it is, eventually, inextricably tied to boosting their employer's bottom line. That is to say, successful sponsors use their activity to grow and manage relevant communities with the ultimate aim of converting some of this community into clients.

Therefore, a crucial task for brands with sponsored assets, for example a cricket team or arts festival, is the creation of highly-targeted communities within the relevant topic area. Time and again, we see the best deploy a small but effective suite of tactics to reach potential clients within their sponsorship space. If you want to examine these tactics, one particular case study stands out.

Investec: a thoroughbred among sponsors

One of the most successful tactics we see repeatedly is the creation of dedicated social media accounts separate from their corporate identities.

Specialist bank and investment manager Investec keeps its sponsorship Twitter and Facebook accounts entirely separate from its corporate accounts. This means that the sponsorship account, which covers several areas in sports, only shares content around sports, and its followers are only served up the content they 'signed up for.'

Why women's sports?

Investec has sponsored women's

hockey for the past five years. In a deal which reportedly cost more than £2.2 million in 2011, Investec became the principal partner of the England and GB elite women's hockey teams, the England Hockey League Women's Premier Division, Conferences and The London Cup, as well as "Quicksticks", a version of hockey for primary school children.

The bank's value to the sport was celebrated in a report by the Women's Sport and Fitness Foundation. When Investec's former Global Head of Marketing, Raymond van Niekerk, was asked 'why women's hockey?' he gave the following [response](#):

'It's a sport people participate in for the love of the game and that inherent and instinctive competitive spirit appeals to us. We also like women's hockey as a large proportion of our clients are female, so we wanted a sponsorship relationship that would hopefully talk directly to them.'

"Successful sponsors use their activity to grow and manage relevant communities with the ultimate aim of converting some of this community into clients."

Do Investec Sport followers match up to the planned target audience?

In order to measure the success of this sponsorship area for Investec, it is necessary to analyse the demographic of its followers on its sports Twitter handle, @investec_sport.

Chart 1

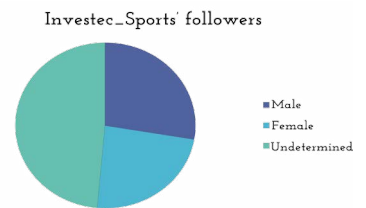
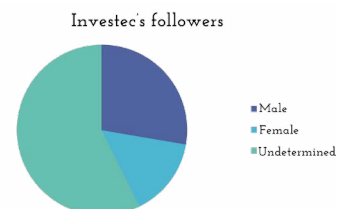


Chart 1, which has been built from the @investec_sport Twitter handle, shows an almost even split between male (27.7%) and female followers (23.7%). While there are slightly more males, a direct comparison with the demographic of Investec's corporate account shows the percentage of female followers (15.6%) against males (27.1%) to be significantly

Chart 2



down.

Breaking Investec Sport's demographic down much further, it is evident that @investec_sport's top three most influential followers (i.e: engaged followers who have amassed a large following) are; hockey's national governing body in

England; England Hockey, the official account for Great Britain Hockey; and professional golfer Lee-Anne Pace, who is also sponsored by Investec. This not only demonstrates the relevancy of @investec_sport's Twitter handle, but also points at the size of its deal with the England Hockey League in comparison with its other sports partnerships.



Investec Sport also leverages these relationships frequently on Twitter, by writing public tweets which signal the positive outcomes of partnership as well as general news around the England hockey team's success.

Where are Investec Sport's followers?

Investec's Twitter bio reads: 'We are involved in multiple sport sponsorships such as Hockey, Cricket, Rugby and Equestrian in our key

geographies of South Africa and the UK.'

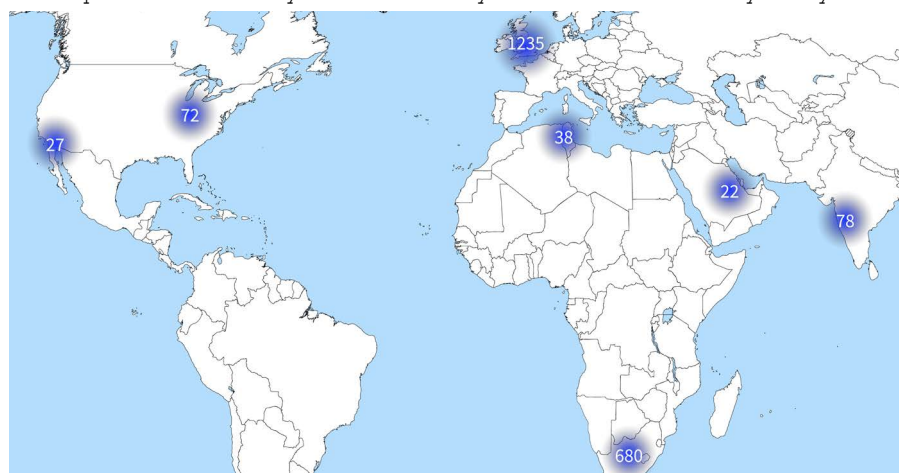
It's evident from analysis of their followers on Twitter that, while the community is worldwide, most of them are from South Africa and the UK, the countries in which Investec's largely operates. It is unlikely that this is a happy accident and far more likely that this is also down to careful targeting of both current and potential clients.

What are Investec Sport's followers talking about?

Finally, research shows that Investec's followers talk around the key areas of Investec's sponsorship, but that the discussion is predominantly around hockey. This is powerful testimony to the size of Investec's investment in the hockey community, as well as the relevancy of its followers.

Asking the right questions

It's crucial that sponsored communities are relevant, given that brands likely view them as potential clients if not already. There are several key tactics involved in nurturing the growth of a highly targeted community, but, just as important, is the regular analysis of that community. Are your followers key communicators in your sponsorship area, for example? Do they live in the areas you need to target for your business? Relevancy is key. ■



KEY POINTS

To recap, successful sponsors generally tend to be very good at doing the following:

1. Defining an audience

This isn't rocket science, but a good sponsor should set out to define their targeted audience in detail. For example, Investec wanted to reach people who liked team sports, but they specifically wanted to reach women who were interested in team sports. In defining your audience, you can go as granular as you'd like. Why not? Targeting communications has never been easier.

2. Finding an audience

It is then key to research where the bulk of your audience's conversations take place. Are they likely to be communicating on Facebook, or Snapchat? Is there a big community already on Instagram? A sponsor should communicate with its audience using that audience's favoured platform.

3. Talking to your audience

Again, not rocket science, but different audiences call for different ways of communicating. Sponsors need to ensure that not only do they talk in a way which suits their targeted community, but also that they speak to their community at the right times. Posting updates on Facebook 9-5 simply doesn't cut it for sports sponsorships, for example.

4. Refine your communications

Last but not least, communication between a sponsor and its targeted audience needs to be honed regularly. Test out times to post and measure the success of each contact you have with your audience. If, like Investec, you find through analytics that the make-up of your targeted audience starts to match your intentions, then you need to identify what tactics worked.

We need to create meaningful experiences

Brands need to work harder than ever to cut through the noise. Henry Chappell, Chief Executive of Pitch, tells us why partnership, not sponsorship, is the future in a digital age.



Henry Chappell, Pitch

In recent years, the marketing landscape has undergone a transformational shift as technology and methods of communication have evolved and the creativity and sophistication of marketers has advanced; we now live in a world where consumers are receiving - and often engaging in - direct brand communication throughout their daily lives.

In this hyper-competitive media landscape, brands need to work far harder to both engage with consumers and understand the returns delivered through their marketing activity.

This has had major implications in the world of corporate sponsorships.

In the past, many brands were - rightly - accused of partnering with major sports and entertainment properties based on little more than a "Chairman's Whim". Partnerships could be justified solely on brand exposure to huge television audiences and an expectation that logos appearing on shirts or perimeter boards would deliver an increase in brand awareness. Any hospitality offered

as part of these sponsorship packages would be considered a welcome bonus to the branding rights.

But as brands have become more competitive in their approach to marketing, more scrutiny has been placed on where every pound is spent and, in particular, measuring the impact of activity has become more sophisticated.

Nowadays, corporate sponsorships follow a far more strategic path. The most successful sponsorships are now seen as true partnerships between brands and rights holders rather than the simple purchase of a suite of marketing assets.

This has led to two main tangible developments in how brand partnerships are approached.

Firstly, brands and rights holders are working far more closely together to engage shared audiences for mutual benefit. They recognise that by understanding their fans and consumers, and engaging with them creatively and authentically in a way that really adds value to the fan experience, they are far more likely to achieve their mutual objectives. It is now widely accepted that creating genuinely meaningful content and

experiences, at events and across media channels, will have a far greater impact - in terms of uplifts in brand awareness, perception and purchase behaviour - than relying on logo exposure alone.

Secondly, the most effective relationships are those where the full potential value of a partnership between two organisations is recognised and maximised. The smartest brands now know to look beyond basic marketing assets and hospitality as an end in themselves, and think creatively about how a partnership can add value to all areas of their business. Partnerships are seen as opportunities to further engage existing audiences in new ways; deliver direct sales opportunities through new audiences, channels and products; maximise existing marketing and CSR programmes; deepen relationships with key stakeholders across all areas of the business; and drive efficiencies through shared learnings, expertise and assets.

As this approach continues to evolve, brands will increasingly find more intelligent and innovative ways of using corporate partnerships to differentiate themselves from their competitors, and create real value returns. ■

Conclusion

So, there we are.

You now know a bit about where corporate sponsorships came from, what the cream of financial services companies are doing today and what might happen in the coming years. Nobody mention Pokémon Go! Eeeek!

But what next?

Well that's up to you. Maybe your company is actually pretty happy limiting its communications topics to its products and services. Plenty of companies do this exceptionally well and don't need to connect with their prospects and customers around their own interests. Think Apple. If you're Apple, then you don't need to think about corporate sponsorship.

But maybe your brand values align perfectly with a specific activity that interests your target audience - the

consumers, buyers or decision-makers you want to get close to. This is an opportunity. Red Bull sponsors death-defying world record attempts because its consumers relate to speed, adrenaline and derring-do.

Or, maybe you need to generate huge amounts of brand awareness to hit sales targets but your products simply don't represent a good route because they're way too complicated or way too highly regulated.

Or, it could be that you've been doing the same old activity for years and it feels tired and old-fashioned - you don't know what it's doing for your sales but you do know that it's costing a fortune.

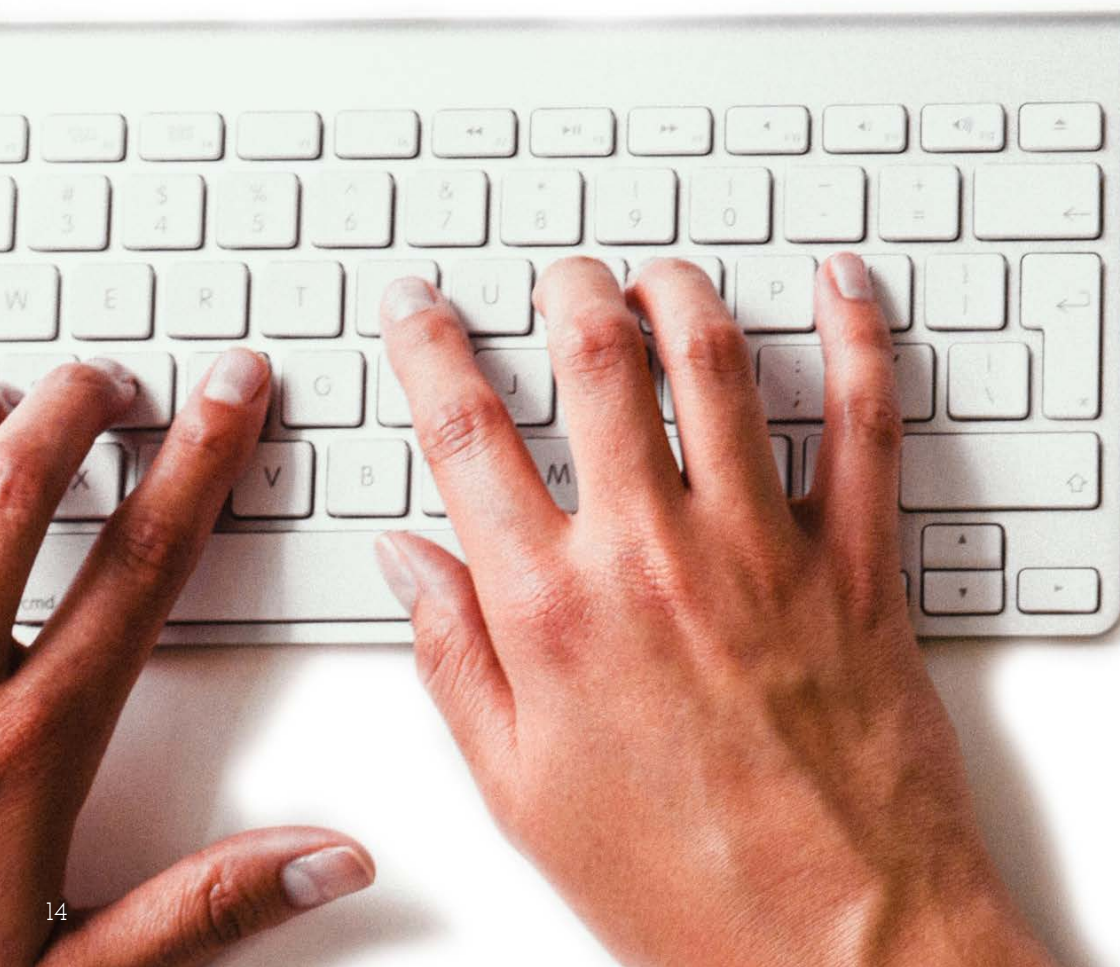
In other words, maybe you need help.

The experts in this report have communicated a clear message: you can't

just stick your brand name on your asset and expect the sales to roll in. You need proactively to involve your fans. You need to find creative ways to engage them. You need to understand that they are on-the-go, always on and hungry for exciting, exclusive, entertaining and educational content.

Ready for the sales pitch? It's simply that MRM was set up to help with exactly these sorts of activities. We have a team of creative, digitally-savvy ex-journalists, writers and designers who excel at creating content, building and implementing strategies and activating sponsorships in a way that achieves stated goals. Why not drop us a line?

That's it. We hope you enjoyed this report and we'd love to know what you think. ■



Contributors



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Adrian manages global brand development, reputation management and integrated communications for insurer MS Amlin. With over 25 years of experience in marketing and brand development, he is also a Registered Chartered Psychologist and holds a PhD from Cardiff University.



Martin Bamford

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Martin is a Chartered Financial Planner as well as a published author, who writes regularly for a variety of trade and consumer publications. He has leveraged sponsorship opportunities in myriad ways in the running of his family business.



Henry Chappell

Chief Executive, Pitch

In 2002, Henry founded Pitch PR, which has since grown to be one of the UK's biggest sports PR agencies. His clients and projects include the UEFA Champions League, BT Sport's broadcasting services and Channel 4.

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ABOUT MRM

MRM is a PR and content agency, which specialises in reputational management, content marketing and sponsorship activation in financial services.





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